

Winter 2009 Product Reviews

A member of the *Reviews in Obstetrics & Gynecology* editorial board reviewed the following devices. The views of the author are personal opinions and do not necessarily represent the views of *Reviews in Obstetrics & Gynecology* or MedReviews®, LLC.

Companies can submit a product for review by e-mailing molson@medreviews.com.

Design/Functionality Scale

- 1 = Poor design; many deficits
- 2 = Solid design; many deficits
- 3 = Good design; few flaws
- 4 = Excellent design; few flaws
- 5 = Excellent design; flaws not apparent

Innovation Scale

- 1 = Nothing new
- 2 = Small twist on standard technology
- 3 = Major twist on standard technology
- 4 = Significant new technology
- 5 = Game changer

Value Scale

- 1 = Added cost with limited benefit
- 2 = Added cost with some benefit
- 3 = Added cost but significant benefit
- 4 = Marginal added cost but significant benefit
- 5 = Significant cost savings

Overall Scale

- 1 = Don't bother
- 2 = Niche product
- 3 = Worth a try
- 4 = Must try
- 5 = Must have

Product: VCare® Uterine Manipulator/Elevator
Company: ConMed Endosurgery
Retail Price: \$88

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Design/Functionality: 3.5

Innovation: 3

Value: 4

Overall Score: 4

Background

As laparoscopic surgery has shifted in scope from diagnostic and simple therapeutic procedures to increasing operative complexity, the ancillary tools used to safely and efficiently accomplish these tasks has evolved in tandem. Where a sponge stick, Jarcho cannula, or a Hulka tenaculum once sufficed as uterine manipulators, technical needs have pushed for better devices with broader functionality. Seeking to address these needs, ConMed Endosurgery (Utica, NY) offers the VCare® Uterine Manipulator/Elevator.

Design/Functionality

As described in the company's product literature, "[the] VCare features a specially designed double-cup system; the forward cup displaces the cervix away from the ureters, retracts the urinary bladder and defines the colpotomy

incision. The back cup prevents loss of pneumoperitoneum. The manipulator tube conforms to the angle of the sacral curve and allows for easy manipulation of the uterus. A 10-cc inflatable balloon at the distal end is used to stabilize the manipulator tube within the uterine cavity.¹ In addition, changes to the forward cup polymers allow the VCare to be used with both electrosurgical and harmonic energy sources, and holes in the cup have been placed so the cup can be sutured to the cervix for enhanced stability if desired.

ConMed claims the VCare saves operating room (OR) time, displaces the cervix away from ureters, displaces the bladder anteriorly, reduces blood loss, defines the dissecting plane of colpotomy, and prevents loss of pneumoperitoneum. Although these claims are not referenced on the Web site, they presumably stem from Dr. Ahluwalia's published work on total laparoscopic hysterectomy from 1996 (Dr. Ahluwalia developed and patented the device).² In this article, although reduced OR time and blood loss were realized, the reason was almost certainly attributable to increased surgeon experience because the VCare device was used in all the cases from the start.

Marketing statements aside, the VCare is pretty good. In numerous trials by the reviewer, it consistently provided superb uterine manipulation and elevation and very nicely delineated the vaginal cuff. Moreover, it is a lot easier to introduce than a RUMI™ System uterine manipulator (CooperSurgical, Trumbull, CT). On the downside, the forward cup still melts with prolonged exposure to a harmonic scalpel and, most annoyingly, the device rotates relative to the plane of the uterus with bigger specimens; suturing the cup to the cervix, which is cumbersome, does completely resolve the problem.

Design/Functionality Score: 3.5

Innovation

The VCare is a clever device. Although its advances may not jump out as tremendous engineering feats, it does address many of the key issues lacking in other instruments. Specifically, the lockable sliding sleeve that adjusts the forward and distal cups is slick and effective, secures the device, and maintains pneumoperitoneum in most cases.

Innovation Score: 3

Value

Priced at \$88, the VCare is a bit costly to use for every case as a uterine manipulator. But, for total or supracervical laparoscopic hysterectomies, the value is in the ease it adds to the procedure, especially when juxtaposed with costs of other disposables one might use for such a procedure.

Value Score: 4



VCare® Uterine Manipulator/Elevator (ConMed Endosurgery, Utica, NY). Photo courtesy of ConMed Endosurgery.

Summary

Overall, the VCare Uterine Manipulator/Elevator is a very solid, well-designed instrument. For those looking to perform laparoscopic hysterectomies without a predetermined uterine manipulator preference, this device is an excellent first choice. Over time, different surgeons may find more cost-effective or preferred options, but this is as good a place to start as any.

Overall Score: 4

References

1. VCare®. ConMed Endosurgery Web site. http://www.conmed.com/endosurgery_vcure.php. Accessed February 1, 2009.
2. Ahluwalia PK. Total laparoscopic hysterectomy. *J Am Assoc Gynecol Laparosc*. 1996;3(4 suppl):S1-S2.

Product: Harvey Stirrups™
Company: William Harvey Medical Equipment
Retail Price: \$1595

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Design/Functionality: 3

Innovation: 1.5

Value: 2

Overall Score: 2.5

Background

Medical stirrups are not cool. They do not catch our attention like a robot, a four-dimensional ultrasound machine, or some new fancy coagulation/cutting device. No, stirrups are not glamorous. We rarely think about them or study them and we certainly do not want to be in them. That